

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 3726

E.O. 11652: SGDS-4
TAGS: SHUM IR PINS
SUBJ: PRISON HUNGER STRIKE REPORTED OVER

REF: A. TEHRAN 3590, B. TEHRAN 3039 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRISON HUNGER STRIKE APPEARS OVER. SOME PRISONER
DEMANDS REPORTEDLY MET. PRECISE FACTS AND FIGURES STILL HAZY.
SETTLEMENT MAY HAVE BEEN TIED TO PROJECTED INTERNATIONAL RED
CROSS (ICRC) VISIT. END SUMMARY.

1. VERY WELL-CONNECTED FOREIGN JOURNALIST INFORMED EMBOFF
THAT GOOD CONTACTS ON OPPOSITIONIST COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE
OF PRISONERS LEARNED THAT THE QASR PRISON HUNGER STRIKE WAS
OVER ON APRIL 10. ACCORDING TO OPPOSITIONIST SOURCES, INMATES
"WON" FOLLOWING CONCESSIONS: A) RIGHT TO RECEIVEDLOCAL BOOKS
AND MAGAZINES UNCENSORED; B) ABILITY TO PURCHASE FOOD OUTSIDE
PRISON IF DESIRED; C) PERMISSION TO HAVE NEEDLES TO MEND CLOTHES;
ANA D) WIDER SPACING IN METAL GRILL THAT SEPARATES PRISONERS
FROM THEIR FAMILIES DURING VISITING HOURS.

2. JOURNALIST HAD CHECKED SEVERAL OTHER SOURCES ON
QUESTION OF NUMBERS INVOLVED AND CONDITION OF PRISONERS AND
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NOTED FACTS IN THIS AREA VERY UNCERTAIN (AND JOURNALIST WOULD
USE THEM ONLY IN VERY GENERAL WAY IN NEWS STORY).
OPPOSITIONISTS CLAIM 400-500 PRISONERS WERE INVOLVED, BUT
JOURNALIST DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS, PREFERRING TO GO WITH
FIGURE CLOSER TO 200 PLUS OR MINUS 30. PROBLEM IS THAT
NOT ALL PRISONERS WERE ON HUNGER STRIKE AT ALL TIMES--
SOME PARTICIPATED ONLY SPORADICALLY, OTHERS ATE SMUGGLED

FOOD TO KEEP UP MINIMUM STRENGTH. ACCORDING TO OPPOSITIONISTS, 100 PRISONERS WENT TO HOSPITAL AFTER HUNGER STRIKE, BUT CHECK WITH OTHER SOURCES INDICATES THAT ONLY SMALL MINORITY REMAINED THERE BEYOND INITIAL HEALTH CHECK.

3. MOST INTERESTING FEATURE OF STRIKE SETTLEMENT IS FACT THAT GOI REPORTEDLY EXPECTED VISIT OF ICRC TEAM WEEK OF APRIL 10-17, AND PRESSURE OF IMPENDING VISIT MAY HAVE HELPED PUSH TO SETTLEMENT. EMBASSY HAS NOT HEARD FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT ICRC TEAM ACTUALLY ARRIVED. SEVERAL JOURNALISTS ALSO UNABLE TO CONFIRM THIS. GOI HAS PLAYED PAST ICRC VISITS VERY CLOSE, AND EMBASSY DOES NOT WISH TO ASK GOI DIRECTLY IN ABSENCE OF PUBLISHED PEG ON WHICH TO HANG QUESTION. NEVERTHELESS, TIMING OF PROJECTED VISIT DOES SQUARE WITH WHAT WE HAVE HEARD OF OTHER GOI ACTIVITY, INCLUDING NEW YEAR'S PARDONS, ESTABLISHMENT OF MORE FLEXIBLE VISITING HOURS, ETC.

4. FOR GENEVA: WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFO ON ICRC VISIT.
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